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ABSTRACT

Ideas to guide parental involvement in educational programs for children are provided in this booklet. Topics that are discussed are: why it is important to involve parents; how parents can be reached; guidelines for involving parents; the parents' role; how parents may involve themselves in their child's school; activities for parental involvement in support of the educational program, how parents may become involved in extracurricular activities; teachers' guidelines for planning home visits; and, additional areas of consideration for school staff members. Parental involvement in the school program is seen to be extremely important to the effectiveness of educational programs in meeting the needs of children. The goals of parents for their children ought to complement those of the school and the goals of both these institutions ought to reinforce one another. The primary responsibility for initiating good relations between the school and the home is seen to rest with the school personnel; however, the parents are also to be interested and supportive of the school program. A list of factors that the school must be concerned with, such as developing positive attitudes within parents toward the school, as well as a list of factors that parents must be concerned with, such as having full information regarding their child's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth are given. (Author/AM)

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PUTTING IT TOGETHER WITH PARENTS

A Guide to Parent Involvement

in

Educational Programs

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California State Department of Education
Wilson Riles - Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, 1973

PREFACE

With the advent of categorical aid programs, parents, teachers and community representatives are required to work together to plan, implement and evaluate special school programs.

Our children are the world's greatest human resource. Schools play an important role in the life of each child. There is a growing demand for information to guide parents and schools to work together so that each pupil's life may unfold and blossom to its fullest.

This booklet endeavors to provide ideas to guide parental involvement in educational programs for the benefit of our children.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in the school program is extremely important to the effectiveness of the educational program in meeting the needs of children. Parents should be helped to realize that they need to support the school in its effort to educate their children. Finding ways and means to educate these children needs to become a challenge to the parents just as it is to the school personnel. Not only should the goals of parents for their children complement those of the school but the goals of both of these basic institutions which are exerting such a tremendous influence on the development of the child should reinforce each other. The primary responsibility for initiating good relations between the school and the home rests with the school personnel; however, the parents, too, must become interested and supportive participants in the school program. Attitudes are improved and understanding is increased as a result of informed interaction among the children, their parents, and school personnel.

The school must be concerned with:

- Developing positive attitudes within parents toward the school.
- Improving the educational philosophy of parents and helping them to take a more active interest in the education of their children.
- Helping to create a more desirable relationship between parents and school staff.
- Bringing the thinking of the community to bear upon the problems of the school.

Parents must be concerned with:

- Having full information regarding their child's growth, intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.
- Finding ways to give service to their school.
- Growing in knowledge of academic areas and child growth and development.
- Increasing their ability in interacting productively with their children and other community members.

I Why Is It Important to Involve Parents?

1. One of the intents of compensatory education legislation is to involve the community so that it gains a personal understanding of education.

2. Traditionally, low-income families tend to become fragmented due to numerous depersonalizing factors of our technological culture including the velocity of social change, the economy's requirement for a very high level of intellectual development, and physical and emotional stress.

3. School staff members should understand that parents of lower socio-economic communities:

   a. Often had negative personal experiences with some of their previous teachers and/or schools.

   b. Are often embarrassed due to their lack of education.

c. Often have a basic distrust of the schools.

d. Need to hear positive things about their children's progress in school.

4. Maximum benefit to the child can only be reached with the support of the home.

a. The school must learn about the home so that the school program can be geared to the needs of the child.

b. The parent needs to learn more about the school program and to be given an opportunity to contribute his ideas to program improvement.

5. Parents are an integral factor in the program's purpose.

6. Problems encountered in conducting a compensatory education program can be accepted by parents when they are understood.

7. The needs of children can best be served through involving parents in a two-way system of communication.

8. "More persons with low incomes and persons from minority ethnic groups need to be included on advisory committees. Committee membership should be open and should be designed to help poor people feel less alienated from the institutions that purport to serve them, to provide poor people with an opportunity to influence the decisions that affect them, to improve communication between low-income persons and other persons in the community, (and) to provide poor persons with an opportunity for socialization into the ways of the community at large."[1]

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[1]Ramiro D. Reyes, "Parent and Community Participation in Compensatory Education Through District Advisory Committees in California - A Progress Report", 1971, p. 19.

II How Can Parents Be Reached?

1. Make parents feel welcome at school.

2. Center programs around the needs and requests of parents.

3. Involve parents whenever possible.

4. Establish lay advisory committees.

5. Devise activities and procedures which include:

   a. Individual teacher-to-parent contacts.

   b. Individual parent-to-parent contacts.

   c. Individual child-to-parent contacts.

6. Make the parent feel that you are interested in his needs and problems.

7. Make parents aware of our need for their participation.

8. "Research is available which indicates that more traditional ways of working with parents, such as in counseling and parent education, have little measurable impact and reach very few people."[2]

9. When meetings are held with nonEnglish speaking community members in the audience, provisions should be made for translations into their native tongues.

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[2]Dr. Catherine Chilman, Chairman, Task Force on Parent Participation, "Parents as Partners in Departmental Programs for Children and Youth", 1968, p. 5.

III Guidelines for Involving Parents

Suggested guidelines for involving parents of the disadvantaged children in the school program are as follows:

1. Principals, counselors, nurses, classroom teachers and other staff members should combine their efforts to help parents develop an interest in the education of their children.

2. Community groups and concerned school patrons can use their influence to encourage indifferent parents to become more interested in their children.

3. Home visitations can be very helpful in establishing rapport with the individual family. Preparations have to be made prior to making home visits. It is well to remember that home visits can be invaluable in establishing good relationships between parents and the school, but if not carefully planned they may further alienate the parents.

4. Small group meetings should be held for these parents because they are unresponsive to the usual invitations to visit the school or to attend a parent-teacher meeting. Flexibility in meeting places should be encouraged (in homes, neighborhood facilities, outdoors, etc.).

    a. There has to be an immediate value to be gained from attending the meeting, such as:

        1) Sewing or cooking hints.

        2) Carpentry or athletics.

        3) Discussion groups planned by the members.

        4) Other "doing" projects.

b. Official leaders should be able to disseminate valuable information in a tactful manner acceptable to the group.

c. School officials should furnish guidance to the groups, but effort should be made to keep their participation to a minimum.

d. Encourage group participation in all activities.

e. Use leadership from within the group as much as possible.

f. Selection of membership for the group will depend upon the objectives.

Some parents work and they are unable to visit the school during school hours. Therefore, we must consider parental involvement as embracing more than parental participation in the school program or visitation to the school. Parental involvement must include ways of showing parents how to help their children at home. For example, parents should understand the importance of:

- Taking time at home to have their children relate their school experiences.
- Expressing an interest in their children's progress in school.
- Helping to prepare their children to attend school every day.
- Encouraging their children to spend more time studying at home and at after-school study centers.

A basic principle is that of working in full partnership with parents rather than independently devising for parents and their children.

5. Employing Parents

"All programs which receive federal aid should, to the maximum extent, provide for the employment of parents and young people and for their services or as volunteers. Priority should be given to parents of children in special programs to help increase their knowledge, skills and sense of participation in programs designed to strengthen their own and other families.

"Clear, concise job descriptions should be prepared and shared with the staff and the advisory committee in advance of actually setting up the jobs."[3]

Educational requirements should be carefully examined and lowered according to the abilities found in the local community.

"Arrest records of disadvantaged persons (especially males) should be carefully assessed and not necessarily used to disqualify people because many low-income people have acquired such records at least in part because of prejudice on the part of law enforcement personnel."[4]

Well-prepared inservice training is essential. Ample opportunities for free discussion and participation are recommended. Role playing is often helpful. Manuscript and cursive writing as practiced in schools should be taught to classroom instructional aides.

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[3]Ibid., p. 23.

[4]Ibid., p. 30.

> "It has been found that previously disadvantaged people often don't necessarily work well with other disadvantaged people. This same point holds in reference to race and sex. It is often wise to attempt a balance of races and sexes. The most critical factor in employment resides in the personality of the staff person, plus his experience, capacity and willingness to learn new ways of working."[5]

IV The Parents' Role

Parents support their child's efforts by:

1. Trying to provide resource or reference materials to help him in his school program.
2. Enlisting the teacher's aid in helping him learn how to use the resources of the school and community library.
3. Helping to create in him a positive attitude toward school.
4. Seeing that he has a good breakfast and proper sleep.
5. Helping him in his venture of getting off to school.
6. Inculcating in him a sense of responsibility.
7. Setting an example for him in attitudes of respect for others.
8. Arranging a place at home for study.
9. Making a point of knowing his friends.

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[5]Ibid., p. 59

10. Supervising his play.

11. Singing to him, reading to him, listening to him while he reads to you.

12. Taking time to talk with him about his day at school.

V How Parents May Involve Themselves in Their Child's School

1. Help your child and his teacher in the solution of his problems.

2. Attend school functions.

3. Take an interest in papers he brings home from school.

4. Don't compare your child with another.

5. Be a volunteer helper or member of an active group of parents.

6. Get acquainted with the teachers.

7. Praise your child for school work well done.

8. Have parent projects that will permit fathers to relate to fatherless youngsters.

9. Learn what is expected of the child.

10. Attend special activities in which your child is participating.

11. Attend parent-teacher conferences.

12. Follow through on what you say you will do.

13. Give help when the school asks for it.

14. Don't put too much emphasis on grades.

VI Activities for Parental Involvement in Support of the Educational Program

1. Operate ditto and mimeograph machines.
2. Make costumes, dramatic sets, etc.
3. Supervise playground activities.
4. Distribute materials.
5. Assist children's learning centers.
6. Prepare art materials.
7. Help as the nurse's aide.
8. Arrange bulletin boards.
9. Research materials in the library.
10. Maintain picture files.
11. Assist with reading groups (games, seatwork, etc.).
12. Correct objectives tests.
13. Sew torn clothes, add buttons.
14. Obtain equipment and supplies for the room.
15. Present interesting hobbies.
16. Plan and help display special exhibits (hobbies of parents).

17. Catalog and maintain a file of resource parents.

18. Tutor small groups.

19. Make telephone calls.

20. Inventory science equipment and supplies.

21. Set up appointments for home visits.

22. Type dittos.

23. Make doll clothes.

24. Repair doll furniture.

25. Read stories to group.

26. Play the piano or other instrument for group activities.

27. Sponsor school-related clubs.

VII How Parents May Become Involved in Extracurricular Activities

1. Share vocational talents.

2. Become familiar with financial aid for students.

3. Collect materials for classroom projects.

4. Build equipment for classroom projects.

5. Recruit new parent volunteers.

6. Encourage goodwill ambassadors for school (parent visits, other parents).

7. Hold "parents' coffees" to discuss community interests.

8. Organize needs committee (parents meet in small groups to discuss PAG needs).

9. Provide transportation for elections.

10. Serve on a committee.

11. Provide transportation to athletic events.

12. Attend school board meetings.

13. Organize parent-child activities.

14. Volunteer to help in scouting, athletic, drama, or other extracurricular activities.

VIII Teachers' Guidelines for Planning Home Visits

1. Make an appointment with the parents prior to a home visit.

2. Try to include both parents in the visit and the child if possible.

3. Be sure parent is aware you are making other home calls.

4. Keep your visit short.

5. Show that you are sincerely interested.

6. Arrange for a substitute teacher while you make home visits.

7. Keep conversation with parents positive. The visit should be social rather than problem-centered.

8. Plan an orientation for those teachers not acquainted with the school area and home situations.

9. Plan according to:

   a. Number of pupils per family.

   b. Number of teachers one child has.

IX Additional Areas of Consideration for School Staff Members

1. Learn about the cultural and religious background of the children and community.

2. Promote cultural pride.

3. Use parents to provide needed substitute parent models in a classroom setting.

4. Accept parents: Let them know they don't have to be perfect.

5. Seek and listen to advice from parents.

6. Teach parents to occasionally expect failure and to use it as an incentive to try again.

X Sample Parent Interest Survey Form[6]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____

I am asking for your help in order to enrich and enlarge your child's program at school.

Do you have a hobby to share? ____ If yes, please specify._____

Do you have talent you are willing to share (cooking, sewing, woodworking, music, art, dramatics, other)? ___ If yes, what?_____

Have you had experiences you are willing to share (travel, etc.)? ___ If yes, please specify_____

Do you have an occupation or an association with a local business or industry of interest to children? _____ If yes, please specify. _____

Would you be interested in helping with any of the following? _____ If so, please check.

__ telephoning __ typing __ bulletin boards

__ cutting out pictures __ pasting

__ filing __ tutoring __ library research

Do you have some ideas of ways you'd like to become more involved in such a school program? _____

What time would you be able to be with us? Please check.

__ before school __ noon __ other

__ morning __ afternoon __ after school

Are there others in your family or neighborhood who would be interested in this program? __ If yes, please specify.

_____

_____
(sign as desired)

_____

[6]Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, "Meeting Parents Halfway - A Guide for Schools", Nov. 1970, p. 16.

XI Sample Form to Record Parent Involvement[7]

PARENT INVOLVEMENT REPORT

School: _____ Grade/Subject: _____

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Parents Involved	Activity

Use back of card for comments.

[7] Ibid., p. 23.

XII Sample Parent Form for School Conference[8]

Name of Child: _____

Parents: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____

Student Strengths Observed at Home by Parent:
Student Needs Observed at Home by Parent:
Suggestions for Action: (To be completed at time of conference) Home Setting: School Setting:

Please complete form prior to scheduled conference. Bring to conference. (Optional)

[8] Ibid., p. 19